

# OUT OF THE CITY. A STORY OF THE NEW WOMAN. BY A. CONAN DOYLE

INTERNATIONAL PRESS ASSOCIATION.  
CHAPTER X.—(CONTINUED).

"Guests! Whose guests?" he cried angrily. "What is the meaning of this exhibition?"

"We have been giving a little supper, papa. They were our guests."

"Oh, indeed!" The doctor laughed sarcastically. "You think it right, then, to entertain young bachelors late at night, to smoke and drink with them, to—Oh, that I should ever have lived to blush for my own daughters! I thank God that your dear mother never saw the day."

"Dearest papa," cried Clara, throwing her arms about him. "Do not be angry with us. If you understood all, you would see that there is no harm in it."

"No harm, miss! Who is the best judge of that?"

"Mrs. Westmacott," suggested Ida, slyly.

The doctor spring from his chair. "Confound Mrs. Westmacott!" he cried, striking frenziedly into the air with his hands. "Am I to hear of nothing but this woman? Is she to confront me at every turn? I will endure it no longer."

"But it was your wish, papa."

"But I will tell you now what my second and wiser wish is, and we shall see if you will obey it as you have the first."

"Of course we will, papa."

"Then my wish is that you should forget the odious notions which you have imbibed, that you should dress and act as you used to do, before ever you saw this woman, and that in future you confine your intercourse with her to such civilities as are necessary between neighbors."

"We are to give up Mrs. Westmacott?"

"Or give me up."

"Oh, dear dad, how can you say anything so cruel?" cried Ida, burrowing her towzy golden hair into her father's shirt front, while Clara pressed her cheek against his whisker. "Of course we shall give her up, if you prefer it."

"Of course we shall, papa."

The doctor patted the two caressing heads. "These are my own two girls again," he cried. "It has been my fault as much as yours. I have been astray, and you have followed me in my error. It was only by seeing your mistakes that I have become conscious of my own. Let us set it aside, and neither say nor think anything more about it."

## CHAPTER XI.

### A BLOT FROM THE BLUE.



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Between the admiral and the widow a very cordial feeling had existed since her day when the old seaman had hauled down his flag and changed his opinions; granting to the yachtswoman all that he had refused to the reformer. His own frank and downright nature respected the same qualities in his neighbor, and a friendliness sprang up between them which was more like that which exists between two men, founded upon esteem and a community of tastes.

"By the way, admiral," said Mrs. Westmacott, as they walked together down to the station. "I understand that his boy of yours in the intervals of paying his devotions to Miss Walker is doing something upon 'change.'"

"Yes, ma'am and, there is no man of his age who is doing so well. He's drawing ahead I can tell you, ma'am. Some of those that started with him are huddled astern now. He touched his five hundred last year, and before he's thirty he'll be making the four figures."

"The reason I asked is that I have small investments to make myself from time to time, and my present broker is a rascal. I should be very glad to let it through your son."

"It is very kind of you, ma'am. His partner is away on a holiday, and Harold would like to push on a bit and show what he can do. You know the poor isn't big enough to hold the lieutenant when the skipper's on shore."

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"Five thousand!" exclaimed the admiral, reckoning in his own mind. "Lemme see! That's twenty-five pounds commission. A nice day's work, upon my word. It is a very handsome order, ma'am."

"Well, I must pay some one, and why not him?"

"I'll tell him, and I'm sure he'll lose no time."

"Oh, there is no great hurry. By the way, I understand from what you said just now that he has a partner."

"Yes, my boy is the junior partner. Pearson is the senior. I was introduced to him years ago, and he offered Harold the opening. Of course we had a pretty stiff premium to pay."

Mrs. Westmacott had stopped, and was standing very stiffly with her red Indian face even grimmer than usual.

"Pearson?" said she. "Jeremiah Pearson?"

"The same."

"Then it's all off," she cried. "You need not carry out that investment."

"Very well, ma'am."

They walked on together side by side, she brooding over some thought of her own, and he a little crossed and disappointed at her caprice and the lost commission for Harold.

"I tell you what, admiral," she exclaimed suddenly, "if I were you I should get your boy out of this partnership."

"But why, madam?"

"Because he is tied to one of the deepest, slyest foxes in the whole city of London."

"Jeremiah Pearson, ma'am? What can you know of him? He bears a good name."

"No one in this world knows Jeremiah Pearson as I know him, admiral. I warn you because I have a friendly feeling both for you and for your son. The man is a rogue and you had best avoid him."

"But these are only words, ma'am. Do you tell me that you know him better than the brokers and jobbers in the city?"

"Man," cried Mrs. Westmacott, "will you allow that I know him when I tell you that my maiden name was Ada Pearson, and that Jeremiah Pearson is my only brother?"

The admiral whistled. "Whew!" cried he. "Now that I think of it, there is a likeness."

"He is a man of iron, admiral—a man without a heart. I should shock you if I were to tell you what I have endured from my brother. My father's wealth was divided equally between us. His own share he ran through in five years, and he has tried since then by every trick of a cunning, low-minded man, by base cajolery, by legal quibbles, by brutal intimidation, to juggle me out of my share as well. There is no villainy of which the man is not capable. Oh, I know my brother, Jeremiah. I know him and I am prepared for him."

"This is all new to me, ma'am. 'Pon my word, I hardly know what to say to it. I thank you for having spoken so plainly. From what you say, this is a poor sort of consort for a man to sail with. Perhaps Harold would do well to cut him adrift."

"Without losing a day."

"Well, we shall talk it over. You may be sure of that. But here we are at the station, so I will just see you into your carriage and then home to see what my wife says to the matter."

As he trudged homeward, thoughtful and perplexed, he was surprised to hear a shout behind him, and to see Harold running down the road after him.

"Why, dad," he cried. "I have just come from town, and the first thing I saw was your back as you marched away. But you are such a quick walker that I had to run to catch you."

The admiral's smile of pleasure had broken his stern face into a thousand wrinkles. "You are early to-day," said he.

"Yes, I wanted to consult you."

"Nothing wrong?"

"Oh no, only an inconvenience."

"What is it, then?"

"How much have we in our private account?"

"Pretty fair. Some eight hundred, I think."

"Oh, half that will be ample. It was rather thoughtless of Pearson."

"What then?"

"Well, you see, dad, when he went away upon this little holiday to Havre he left me to pay accounts and so on. He told me that there was enough at the bank for all claims. I had occasion on Tuesday to pay away two cheques, one for £80 and the other for £120, and here they are returned with a bank notice that we have already overdrawn to the extent of some hundreds."

The admiral looked very grave. "What's the meaning of that, then?" he asked.

"Oh, it can easily be set right. You see Pearson invests all the spare capital and keeps as small a margin as possible in the bank. Still it was too bad for him to allow me even to run a risk of having a cheque returned. I have written to him and demanded his authority to sell out some stock, and I have written an explanation to these people. In the meantime, however, I have had to issue several cheques; so

I had better transfer part of our private account to meet them."

"Quite so, my boy. All that's mine is yours. But who do you think this Pearson is? He is Mrs. Westmacott's brother."

"Really. What a singular thing! Well, I can see a likeness now that you mention it. They have both the same hard type of face."

"She has been warning me against him—says he is the rankest pirate in London. I hope that it is all right, boy, and that we may not find ourselves in broken water."

Harold had turned a little pale as he heard Mrs. Westmacott's opinion of his senior partner. It gave shape and substance to certain vague fears and suspicions of his own which had been pushed back as often as they obtruded themselves as being too monstrous and fantastic for belief.

"He is a well-known man in the city, dad," said he.

"Of course he is—of course he is. That is what I told her. They would have found him out there if anything had been amiss with him. Bless you, there's nothing so bitter as a family quarrel. Still it is just as well that you have written about this affair, for we may as well have all fair and above board."

But Harold's letter to his partner was crossed by a letter from his partner to Harold. It lay awaiting him upon the breakfast table next morning, and it sent the heart into his mouth as he read it, and caused him to spring up from his chair with a white face and staring eyes.

"My boy! My boy!"

"I am ruined, mother—ruined!" He stood gazing wildly in front of him, while the sheet of paper fluttered down to the carpet. Then he dropped back into the chair, and sank his face into his hands. His mother had her arms round him in an instant, while the admiral, with shaking fingers, picked up the letter from the floor and adjusted his glasses to read it.

"My Dear Denver," it ran. "By the time that this reaches you I shall be out of the reach of yourself or of any one else who may desire an interview. You need not search for me, for I assure you that this letter is posted by a friend, and that you will have your trouble in vain if you try to find me. I am sorry to leave you in such a tight place, but one or other of us must be squeezed, and on the whole I prefer that it should be you. You'll find nothing in the bank, and about £13,000 unaccounted for. I'm not sure that the best thing you can do is not to realize what you can and imitate your senior's example. If you act at once you may get clean away. If not, it's only that you must put up your shutters, but I am afraid that this missing money could hardly be included as an ordinary debt, and of course you are legally responsible for it just as much as I am. Take a friend's advice and get to America. A young man with brains can always do something out there, and you can live down this little mischance. It will be a cheap lesson if it teaches you to take nothing upon trust in business, and to insist upon knowing exactly what your partner is doing, however senior he may be to you. Yours faithfully, JEREMIAH PEARSON."

"Great heavens!" groaned the admiral, "he has absconded."

"And left me both a bankrupt and a thief."

"No, no, Harold," sobbed his mother. "All will be right. What matter about money?"

"Money, mother! It is my honor."

"The boy is right. It is his honor, and my honor, for his is mine. This is a sore trouble, mother, when we thought our life's troubles were all behind us, but we will bear it as we have borne others."

He held out his stringy hand, and the two old folk sat with bowed grey heads, their fingers intertwined, strong in each other's love and sympathy.

"We were too happy," she sighed. "But it is God's will, mother."

"Yes, John, it is God's will."

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"No honor can be lost, John, where no dishonor has been done. What have you done? What has Harold done? There is no question of honor."

The old man shook his head, but Harold had already called together his clear practical sense, which for an instant in the presence of this frightful blow had deserted him.

"The matter is right, dad," said he. "It is bad enough, heaven knows, but we must not take too dark a view of it. After all, this insolent letter is in itself evidence that I had nothing to do with the schemes of the base villain who wrote it."

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"Dear dad! How could you possibly know? As he says in his letter, it has given me a lesson. But he was so much older and so much more experienced, that it was hard for me to ask to examine his books. But we must waste no time. I must go to the city."

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